

From the Tampa Tribune

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By Howard Altman

[Bilirakis Named Vice Chair of House Committee on Veterans' Affairs](#)

The Bay area is getting a little extra congressional clout when it comes to veterans affairs.

Rep. Gus Bilirakis (R-Palm Harbor) today was named Vice Chairman of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

Here's more information from his office:

The position will allow Bilirakis to play a vital role in providing veterans access to the benefits they have earned and deserve. At 1.7 million, Florida has the second-largest population of military veterans in the U.S.

"It is an honor to continue to serve, not only the veterans in my district, but also those throughout the nation," Bilirakis said. "As our men and women in uniform continue returning home from Iraq and Afghanistan, this Committee has an important role in ensuring that their needs are met."

In addition to providing veterans with access to the appropriate benefits, the committee also will oversee and evaluate the operations of the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA), the second largest of the 14 Cabinet departments.

"I look forward to improving efficiency in the current system and know that this Congress in particular will give us that opportunity," Bilirakis said.

Bilirakis has served on the Veterans' Affairs Committee since joining Congress in 2007. He also is Co-Chair of the Military Veterans Caucus. Bilirakis has introduced legislation to address the concurrent receipt of military retired pay and VA disability, expand the Combat-Related Special

Compensation (CRSC) and has worked to establish new programs to help those with traumatic brain injuries and other mental health needs.

Congressman Jeff Miller (R-Pensacola) is the committee chair.